DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 264 749 HE 018 753

TITLE Tertiary Education Fees Public Opinion Poll, Australia.
INSTITUTION McNair Anderson Associates Pty., Ltd., (Australia).
SPONS AGENCY Australian Teachers' Federation, Canberra.; Federation of Australian Univ. Staff Associations.; Federation of Coll. Academics (Australia).
PUB DATE Mar 85
NOTE 40p.
AVAILABLE FROM Australian Teachers Federation, 18-20 Lincoln Square, Carlton, Victoria, Australia 3053 ($4.00).
PUB TYPE Statistical Data (110) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Attendance; Educational Policy; Fees; *Foreign Countries; Government School Relationship; Postsecondary Education; *Public Opinion; *Public Policy; Questionnaires; Student Costs; Surveys; *Tuition; Unions; *Voting
IDENTIFIERS *Australia

ABSTRACT

The public reaction to the proposal that the Australian government should reintroduce fees for tertiary education was surveyed in 1985. The influence of the proposal on the way people would vote in a federal election was also investigated. The fee would be between $900 and $1,500 per year for full-time tertiary education. As part of a McNair Anderson survey, house-to-house interviews were conducted with 1,279 people, using a probability sample design. The respondents were distributed by state, age, and sex. The poll found that 74% of Australians opposed fees, and 21% indicated that reintroduction of fees by the federal government would affect the party they would support in voting. About 36% of 18-24 year old and about 27% of 14-17 year olds said that they would change their vote over fees. Tables show separate results by sex, five age groups, geographic region, level of education completed, four occupational categories, number of people in household, and marital status. For each questionnaire item, the percent of students who agreed/disagreed with the statement or didn't know is shown. Included is an edition of the Australian Teachers' Federation's Research Notes, which summarizes the poll's findings and implications, with attention to youth policy problems, and roles of teacher's unions. (SW)

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TERTIARY EDUCATION FEES

PUBLIC OPINION POLL

AUSTRALIA

MARCH 1985

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McNAIR ANDERSON ASSOCIATES PTY. LTD.

IN SYDNEY	:	40 Miller Street, North Sydney, 2060	Phone: 929 6122
IN MELBOURNE	:	14 Queens Road, Melbourne, 3004	Phone: 267 6166
IN BRISBANE	:	30 Herschel Street, Brisbane, 4000	Phone: 229 8076
IN ADELAIDE	:	147 Ward Street, North Adelaide, 5006	Phone: 267 1399
IN PERTH	:	7 Havelock Street, West Perth, 6005	Phone: 322 1652

McNAIR SURVEYS NZ LTD.

IN AUCKLAND	:	3-5 Auburn Street, Takapuna, Auckland 9	Phone: 49 2144
IN WELLINGTON	:	169 The Terrace, Wellington	Phone: 72 4380

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INTRODUCTION

This report contains the results of personal interviews among 1,279 people aged 14 and over throughout Australia.

The survey was conducted as part of a McNair Market Monitor, that is, a McNair Anderson "Omnibus" Survey in which various clients sponsor their own exclusive questions.

Objectives of the Survey

The basic purpose of the investigation was to assess:

(a) public reaction to the recent suggestion that the Federal Government should re-introduce fees for tertiary education.

(b) whether the re-introduction of fees for tertiary education would influence the way people vote in a Federal election.

Questions on these and related topics were incorporated into a questionnaire, a copy of which appears at the end of this report. Standard McNair Anderson classification questions appeared elsewhere on the questionnaire.

Method of the Survey

All information was obtained in personal house-to-house interviews by trained McNair Anderson interviewers, who worked under the close supervision of senior Field Supervisors.

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A probability sample design was used, with sample representation from most of the 148 Federal electorates throughout Australia (except the electorate of Northern Territory). Over 150 interviewing areas were used, with each electorate having a probability of inclusion proportional to its electoral enrolment.

Interviewing areas were all Census collectors' districts, chosen systematically with probabilities of selection proportional to size. This ensured a thoroughly well-spread and representative selection of sample localities (including rural as well as urban localities) throughout each State.

Within each selected collector's district, a starting-point was chosen at random and a small cluster of consecutive households was called on beginning from that point. One person was interviewed per household. Equal numbers of men and women were interviewed per cluster.

All fieldwork was conducted during the weekend of March 30 and 31 1985. The weekend interviews ensured that due proportions of employed people were included in the sample, as well as non-employed people.

Composition of the Sample and Weighting of Results

The 1,279 people in the survey were distributed by States, age and sex as set out below. For comparison, estimated populations are also shown:

	Estimated Population Aged 14+ June 30,1985		Actual Sample	
	No.	%	No.	%
States				
New South Wales & Australian Capital Territory	4,438,000	37	430	33
Victoria and Tasmania	3,549,000	29	392	31
Queensland, South Australia & Western Australia	4,127,000	34	457	36
	12,113,000	100	1,279	100
Age and Sex				
14-17	1,051,000	9	129	10
18-24	1,899,000	16	149	12
25-39	3,705,000	30	399	31
40-54	2,450,000	20	299	23
55+	3,009,000	25	303	24
Males	5,998,000	50	639	50
Females	6,116,000	50	640	50
Total 14 and over	12,113,000	100	1,279	100

It will be seen that the distribution of the sample was purposely not exactly in proportion to the distribution of the population, in so far as the smaller States were purposely somewhat over-sampled. All results were therefore "weighted" by age, sex and geographical areas so as to bring the sample exactly into

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line with the distribution of the population by these characteristics. The composition of the sample by these and other characteristics is shown in the computer sheets as reproduced in this report.

Presentation of Results

Some key findings and a question-by-question summary of results appear on the following pages.

The detailed results in this report are in the form of computer tables. These show separate results for:

All people aged 14 years and over

Males and females

People in five age groups - 14-17,18-24, 25-39,40-54 and 55 and over

People in New South Wales and the ACT,Victoria and Tasmania,Queensland and Western Australia,and South Australia

People in the six State capital cities,and those in all other areas

People in three groups according to their country of birth - Australia,United Kingdom and all other countries

People in four groups according to the last level they completed in their formal education - primary school, high school for up to 3 years, high school for 4 to 6 years, and at least some university or other tertiary

People in four occupational groups - white collar,blue collar,home duties (not otherwise employed) and others (retired people, unemployed, students)

People in four groups according to the occupation of the head of the household - white collar, blue collar, home duties (not otherwise employed) and others (retired people, unemployed, students)

People in four groups according to their voting intention if a Federal election were held today - ALP voters, Liberal-NP voters, Australian Democrats voters, and voters for other parties and don't know/not stated voting intentions.

People in three groups according to the number of people in the household- 1 or 2, 3 or 4, and 5 or more

People in four groups according to the age of the youngest person in the household - 0-4, 5-12,13-17 and 18 or over

People in three groups according to their marital status - married, single, and widowed/divorced/separated

The detailed results in this report are presented as pairs of figures - the top figure in each pair being a projected number of people in thousands and the bottom figure being a percentage. Sample and projected numbers of people on whom the percentages are calculated are always clearly shown at the top of each column. Since the sample base numbers are sometimes relatively small (e.g. for people aged 14 to 17), special care should be taken in these cases to allow for a relatively wide possible margin of error in the results presented.

The order in which the tables appear is the same as the order of questions in the questionnaire. Figures do not always add exactly to totals, due to rounding and multiple replies.

SOME KEY FINDINGS

Following are some of the key findings of this research:

- 74% of Australians disagree that students or their families should be charged a fee for tertiary education. The 74% include 84% of people aged 18 to 24.

- 79% of Australians oppose the proposed fee of between $900 and $1500 per year for full-time tertiary education. These include 90% of people aged 18 to 24.

- 28% of people say that if the Federal Government re-introduced tertiary education fees, this would have a bearing on the political party for which they vote. These include 43% of people aged 18 to 24.

- 21% of people say that if the Federal Government re-introduced tertiary education fees, this would be sufficiently important for them to change the party for which they vote. These include 37% of people aged 18 to 24.

Clearly, the vast majority of Australians - especially people aged 18 to 24-are opposed to fees for tertiary education, and many feel sufficiently strongly about the subject to change the political party for which they vote (if tertiary education fees were re-introduced).

The next page shows the actual questions asked in this research, and the overall answers to each question.

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SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Following is a question-by-question summary of the main results of this research:

"Australia has had free education at Universities and Colleges for more than ten years. It has been suggested that the Federal Government should in future charge students or their families a fee for tertiary education.

"1. Do you agree or disagree that students or their families should be charged a fee for tertiary education?"

	%
Agree	22
Disagree	74
Don't know/not stated	4

"2. The proposed fee could amount to between $900 and $1500 per year for full-time study and a lower fee for part-time study. Do you agree or disagree that students or their families should be charged a fee of between $900 and $1500 per year for full-time tertiary education?"

	%
Agree	17
Disagree	79
Don't know/not stated	4

"3. If the Federal Government re-introduced tertiary education fees,

"(a)would this have a bearing on the political party for which you vote?"

	%
Yes	28
No	68
Don't know/not stated	4

"3(b)would this be sufficiently important for you to change the party for which you vote?"

	%
Yes	21
No	75
Don't know/not stated	4

For the first two questions, disagreement was especially strong among people aged 14 to 24. For the last two questions, 'yes' answers were especially frequent among people in the 18 to 24 age group.

The computer tables show how people's answers varied according to many different sub-groups of the population.

TERTIARY EDUCATION FEES - APRIL 1985

BASE : TOTAL PERSONS 14 YEARS AND OVER

WHETHER AGREE OR DISAGREE THAT STUDENTS OR THEIR FAMILIES SHOULD BE CHARGED A FEE FOR TERIARY EDUCATION (G1)

	TOTAL 14+	MALES	FEM-ALES	14-17	18-24	25-39	40-54	55+	NSW/ ACT	VIC/ TAS	QLD/ WA	SA	METRO	COUN-TRY	AUST	UK	OTHER
SAMPLE SIZE	1279	639	640	129	149	399	299	303	430	392	306	151	797	482	970	135	174
POTENTIAL	12113	5998	6116	1051	1899	3705	2450	3009	4438	3549	3049	1078	7755	4359	9267	1227	1620
AGREE	2621	1562	1059	105	223	727	577	989	1087	690	673	170	1799	821	2025	329	267
	21.6	26.0	17.3	10.0	11.8	19.6	23.6	32.8	24.5	19.5	22.1	15.8	23.2	18.8	21.9	26.8	16.5
DISAGREE	8948	4204	4744	850	1595	2841	1797	1865	3160	2714	2293	821	5521	3427	6830	846	1272
	73.9	70.1	77.6	80.9	84.0	76.7	73.3	62.0	71.2	76.5	73.9	76.2	71.2	78.6	73.7	68.9	73.6
DON'T KNOW/NOT STATED	545	232	313	96	80	137	76	156	191	145	123	87	435	110	412	53	80
	4.5	3.9	5.1	9.1	4.2	3.7	3.1	5.2	4.3	4.1	4.0	8.0	5.6	2.5	4.4	4.3	5.0

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TERTIARY EDUCATION FEES - APRIL 1985

BASE : TOTAL PERSONS 14 YEARS AND OVER

WHETHER AGREE OR DISAGREE THAT STUDENTS OR THEIR FAMILIES SHOULD BE CHARGED A FEE FOR TERIARY EDUCATION (Q1)

	TOTAL 14+	EDUCATION				OCCUPATION				OCCUPATION -HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD			
		PRIMARY	HIGH -3 YRS	HIGH 4-6 YRS	TERT-IARY	WHITE COLLAR	BLUE COLLAR	HOME DUTIES	OTHER	WHITE COLLAR	BLUE COLLAR	HOME DUTIES	OTHER
SAMPLE SIZE	1279	138	442	418	281	364	291	332	292	431	455	117	276
POTENTIAL	12113	1281	4105	4007	2721	3067	2806	3119	2822	3950	4263	1173	2728
AGREE	2621	366	871	820	564	708	700	511	694	850	796	201	774
	21.6	28.6	21.2	20.5	20.7	21.0	25.2	16.4	24.6	21.5	18.7	17.1	28.4
DISAGREE	8948	832	2992	3018	2106	2520	2011	2433	1984	2887	3287	899	1875
	73.9	64.9	72.9	75.3	77.4	74.8	71.7	78.0	70.3	73.1	77.1	76.6	68.7
DON'T KNOW/NOT STATED	545	84	243	169	51	139	87	175	144	213	180	74	79
	4.5	6.5	5.9	4.2	1.9	4.1	3.1	5.6	5.1	5.4	4.2	6.3	2.9

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BASE : TOTAL PERSONS 14 YEARS AND OV R

WHETHER AGREE OR DISAGREE THAT STUDENTS OR THEIR FAMILIES SHOULD BE CHARGED A FEE FOR TERIARY EDUCATION (Q1)

	TOTAL 14+	VOTING INTENTION				NO. IN HOUSEHOLD			AGE OF YOUNGEST				MARITAL STATUS		
		ALP	LIB/ NP	DEMO- CRATS	OTHER /DK	1-2	3-4	5+	0-4	5-12	13-17	18+	MARR-	SINGLE	WID/DIV SEP
SAMPLE SIZE	1279	504	464	77	234	494	538	247	224	230	171	652	789	293	196
POTENTIAL	12113	4887	4332	760	2126	4836	5021	2257	2132	2040	1519	6410	7248	2934	1914
AGREE	2621	996	1072	138	415	1308	870	434	408	370	199	1636	1643	505	473
	21.6	20.4	24.7	18.0	19.5	27.0	17.5	19.2	19.1	18.2	13.1	25.5	22.7	17.2	24.7
DISAGREE	8948	3734	3019	603	1591	3335	3944	1669	1619	1567	1214	4540	5347	2244	1340
	73.9	76.4	69.7	78.6	74.8	69.0	78.6	73.9	75.9	76.8	80.0	70.8	73.8	76.5	70.0
DON'T KNOW/NOT STATED	545	158	241	26	120	194	198	154	105	102	105	233	259	185	102
	4.5	3.2	5.6	3.4	5.7	4.0	3.9	6.8	4.9	5.0	6.9	3.6	3.6	6.3	5.3

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WHETHER AGREE OR DISAGREE THAT STUDENTS OR THEIR FAMILIES SHOULD BE CHARGED A FEE BETWEEN $900 - $1500 P.A. FOR FULL-TIME TERTIARY EDUCATION (Q1)

BASE : TOTAL PERSONS 14 YEARS AND OVER

	TOTAL 14+	MALES	FEM-ALES	14-17	18-24	25-39	40-54	55+	NSW/ ACT	VIC/ TAS	QLD/ WA	SA	METRO	COUN-TRY	AUST	UK	OTHER
SAMPLE SIZE	1279	639	640	129	149	399	299	303	430	392	306	151	797	482	970	135	174
POTENTIAL	12113	5998	6116	1051	1099	3705	2450	3009	4438	3549	3049	1078	7755	4359	9267	1227	1620
AGREE	2033	1175	859	23	144	567	493	806	778	521	581	154	1419	615	1566	236	231
	16.8	19.6	14.0	2.2	7.6	15.3	20.1	26.8	17.5	14.7	19.1	14.3	18.3	14.1	16.9	19.3	14.3
DISAGREE	9589	4581	5008	928	1699	3021	1905	2035	3461	2094	2373	861	5984	3605	7351	941	1297
	79.2	76.4	81.9	88.3	87.5	81.5	77.8	67.6	78.0	81.5	77.8	79.9	77.2	82.7	79.3	76.7	80.1
DON'T KNOW/NOT STATED	491	242	249	99	55	117	52	168	199	134	95	63	352	139	350	49	92
	4.1	4.0	4.1	9.4	2.9	3.2	2.1	5.6	4.5	3.8	3.1	5.8	4.5	3.2	3.8	4.0	5.7

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BASE : TOTAL PERSONS 14 YEARS AND OVER

WHETHER AGREE OR DISAGREE THAT STUDENTS OR THEIR FAMILIES SHOULD BE CHARGED A FEE BETWEEN $900 - $1500 P.A. FOR FULL-TIME TERTIARY EDUCATION (Q2)

	TOTAL 14+	EDUCATION				OCCUPATION				OCCUPATION -HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD			
		PRIMARY	HIGH -3 YRS	HIGH 4-6 YRS	TERT-IARY	WHITE COLLAR	BLUE COLLAR	HOME DUTIES	OTHER	WHITE COLLAR	BLUE COLLAR	HOME DUTIES	OTHER
SAMPLE SIZE	1279	138	442	418	281	364	291	332	292	431	455	117	276
POTENTIAL	12113	1281	4105	4007	2721	3367	2806	3119	2822	3950	4263	1173	2728
AGREE	2033	295	717	558	464	573	468	456	537	733	560	166	574
	16.8	23.0	17.5	13.9	17.1	17.0	16.7	14.6	19.0	18.6	13.1	14.2	21.1
DISAGREE	9589	922	3171	3275	2221	2679	2238	2535	2138	3051	3532	946	2060
	79.2	72.0	77.2	81.7	81.6	79.6	79.8	81.3	75.7	77.2	82.9	80.7	75.5
DON'T KNOW/NOT STATED	491	64	218	174	35	116	99	123	149	166	171	61	94
	4.1	5.0	5.3	4.3	1.3	3.4	3.5	4.1	5.2	4.2	4.0	5.2	3.4

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TERTIARY EDUCATION FEES - APRIL 1985

BASE : TOTAL PERSONS 14 YEARS AND OVER

WHETHER AGREE OR DISAGREE THAT STUDENTS OR THEIR FAMILIES SHOULD BE CHARGED A FEE BETWEEN $900 - $1500 P.A. FOR FULL-TIME TERTIARY EDUCATION (Q2)

	TOTAL 14+	VOTING INTENTION				NO IN HOUSEHOLD			AGE OF YOUNGEST				MARITAL STATUS		
		ALP	LIB/NP	DEMOCRATS	OTHER/DK	1-2	3-4	5+	0-4	5-12	13-17	18+	MARR-	SINGLE	WID/DIV SEP
SAMPLE SIZE	1279	504	464	77	234	494	538	247	224	230	171	652	789	293	196
POTENTIAL	12113	4887	4332	760	2126	4836	5021	2257	2132	2040	1519	6410	7248	2934	1914
AGREE	2033	787	896	95	256	951	670	405	412	297	122	1195	1341	278	414
	16.8	16.1	20.7	12.4	12.0	19.7	13.5	17.9	19.3	14.6	8.1	18.6	18.5	9.5	21.6
DISAGREE	9589	3938	3255	640	1736	3718	4146	1725	1641	1639	1295	5008	5673	2478	1420
	79.2	81.0	75.1	83.3	81.6	76.9	82.6	76.4	77.0	80.3	85.3	78.1	78.3	84.5	74.2
DON'T KNOW/NOT STATED	491	142	181	33	135	168	196	127	79	104	102	207	234	178	80
	4.1	2.9	4.2	4.3	6.4	3.5	3.9	5.6	3.7	5.1	6.7	3.2	3.2	6.1	4.2

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TERTIARY EDUCATION FEES - APRIL 1985

IF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT RE-INTRODUCED TERTIARY EDUCATION FEES

BASE : TOTAL PERSONS 14 YEARS AND OVER

	TOTAL 14+	MALES	FEMALES	14-17	18-24	25-39	40-54	55+	NSW/ ACT	VIC/ TAS	QLD/ WA	SA	METRO	COUN -TRY	AUST	UK	OTHER
SAMPLE SIZE	1279	639	640	129	149	399	299	303	430	392	306	151	797	482	970	135	174
POTENTIAL	12113	5998	6116	1091	1099	3705	2450	3009	4438	3349	3049	1078	7755	4359	9267	1227	1620
WHETHER THIS WOULD HAVE ANY BEARING UPON VOTING INTENTION																	
YES	3409	1545	1864	381	817	1109	589	514	1385	983	710	330	2392	1017	2549	319	541
	28.1	25.8	30.5	36.3	43.0	29.9	24.0	17.1	31.2	27.7	23.3	30.6	30.8	23.3	27.5	26.0	33.4
NO	8174	4233	3941	515	786	2485	1784	2404	2844	2413	2251	666	4938	3237	6297	885	992
	67.5	70.6	64.4	49.0	51.9	67.1	72.8	79.9	64.1	68.0	73.8	61.8	63.7	74.3	68.0	72.1	61.3
DON'T KNOW/NOT STATED	531	220	310	155	96	111	77	91	209	153	88	82	426	105	421	23	87
	4.4	3.7	5.1	14.7	5.1	3.0	3.2	3.0	4.7	4.3	2.9	7.6	5.5	2.4	4.5	1.9	5.4
WHETHER IT WOULD BE SUFFICIENTLY IMPORTANT TO CHANGE THE PARTY VOTED FOR																	
YES	2510	1190	1320	283	700	798	381	348	1103	681	409	318	1754	757	1908	204	398
	20.7	19.8	21.6	26.9	36.9	21.5	15.6	11.6	24.9	19.2	13.4	29.5	22.6	17.4	20.6	16.6	24.6
NO	9043	4521	4522	612	1093	2771	1974	2593	3052	2697	2580	714	5586	3457	6936	984	1122
	74.6	75.4	73.9	58.2	57.6	74.8	80.6	86.2	68.8	76.0	84.6	66.2	72.0	79.3	74.9	80.2	69.3
DON'T KNOW/NOT STATED	561	287	274	157	105	135	95	69	283	171	61	47	415	146	422	39	99
	4.6	4.8	4.5	14.9	5.6	3.6	3.9	2.3	6.4	4.8	2.0	4.3	5.4	3.3	4.6	3.2	6.1

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TERTIARY EDUCATION FEES - APRIL 1985

BASE : TOTAL PERSONS 14 YEARS AND OVER

IF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT RE-INTRODUCED TERTIARY EDUCATION FEES

	TOTAL 14+	EDUCATION				OCCUPATION				OCCUPATION -HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD			
		PRIMARY	HIGH -3 YRS	HIGH 4-6 YRS	TERT-IARY	WHITE COLLAR	BLUE COLLAR	HOME DUTIES	OTHER	WHITE COLLAR	BLUE COLLAR	HOME DUTIES	OTHER
SAMPLE SIZE	1279	138	442	418	281	364	291	332	292	431	455	117	276
POTENTIAL	12113	1281	4105	4007	2721	3367	2806	3119	2822	3950	4263	1173	2728
WHETHER THIS WOULD HAVE ANY BEARING UPON VOTING INTENTION													
YES	3409	237	977	1206	989	859	783	999	768	1070	1279	369	691
	28.1	18.5	23.8	30.1	36.3	25.5	27.9	32.0	27.2	27.1	30.0	31.5	25.3
NO	8174	958	2933	2586	1698	2421	1884	1972	1898	2738	2721	732	1984
	67.5	74.7	71.4	64.5	62.4	71.9	67.1	63.2	67.3	69.3	63.8	62.4	72.7
DON'T KNOW/NOT STATED	531	86	196	215	34	87	139	148	156	142	263	72	53
	4.4	6.7	4.8	5.4	1.2	2.6	5.0	4.7	5.5	3.6	6.2	6.2	1.9
WHETHER IT WOULD BE SUFFICIENTLY IMPORTANT TO CHANGE THE PARTY VOTED FOR													
YES	2510	143	744	844	779	624	579	692	614	774	974	263	500
	20.7	11.1	18.1	21.1	28.6	18.5	20.6	22.2	21.8	19.6	22.8	22.4	18.3
NO	9043	1090	3158	2895	1700	2634	2045	2315	2049	3005	3011	875	2152
	71.6	85.1	76.9	72.3	69.8	78.2	72.9	74.2	72.6	76.1	70.6	74.6	78.9
DON'T KNOW/NOT STATED	561	49	203	269	41	108	102	112	159	171	278	36	76
	4.6	3.8	4.9	6.7	1.5	3.2	6.5	3.6	5.6	4.3	6.5	3.0	2.8

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TERTIARY EDUCATION FEES - APRIL 1985

BASE : TOTAL PERSONS 14 YEARS AND OVE

IF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT RE-INTRODUCED TERTIARY EDUCATION FEES

	TOTAL 14+	VOTING INTENTION				NO. IN HOUSEHOLD			AGE OF YOUNGEST				MARITAL STATUS		
		ALP	LIB/ NP	DEMO- CRATS	OTHER /DK	1-2	3-4	5+	0-4	5-12	13-17	18+	MARR-	SINGLE	WID/DIV SEP
SAMPLE SIZE	1279	504	464	77	234	494	530	247	224	230	171	652	789	293	196
POTENTIAL	12113	4867	4332	768	2126	4836	5021	2257	2132	2040	1519	6410	7243	2934	1914
WHETHER THIS WOULD HAVE ANY BEARING UPON VOTING INTENTION															
YES	3409	1495	927	370	609	1117	1510	782	672	679	509	1549	1849	1041	502
	28.1	30.6	21.4	49.2	28.6	23.1	30.1	34.7	31.5	33.3	33.5	24.2	25.5	35.5	26.2
NO	8174	3213	3288	375	1298	3623	3227	1325	1377	1208	879	4696	5177	1660	1337
	67.5	65.7	75.9	48.8	61.1	74.9	64.3	58.7	64.6	59.2	57.9	73.3	71.4	56.6	69.8
DON'T KNOW/NOT STATED	531	179	118	15	219	97	284	150	83	152	131	165	222	233	75
	4.4	3.7	2.7	1.9	10.3	2.0	5.7	6.6	3.9	7.4	8.6	2.6	3.1	7.9	3.9
WHETHER IT WOULD BE SUFFICIENTLY IMPORTANT TO CHANGE THE PARTY VOTED FOR															
YES	2510	1028	645	336	501	788	1181	541	460	515	370	1158	1282	847	363
	20.7	21.0	14.9	43.8	23.6	16.3	23.5	24.0	21.6	25.2	24.4	18.1	17.7	28.9	19.0
NO	9043	3640	3621	401	1381	3981	3541	1521	1569	1357	1010	5100	5687	1852	1504
	74.6	74.5	83.6	52.2	65.0	82.3	70.5	67.4	73.6	66.5	66.5	79.6	78.5	63.1	78.6
DON'T KNOW/NOT STATED	561	219	67	31	244	68	290	195	103	168	139	152	280	235	47
	4.6	4.5	1.5	4.0	11.5	1.4	5.9	8.6	4.8	8.2	9.1	2.4	3.9	8.0	2.4

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(1 - 1)

ALL INTERVIEWS 14+

Australia has had free education at Universities and Colleges for more than ten years. It has been suggested that the Federal Government should in future charge students or their families a fee for tertiary education.

1. Do you agree or disagree that students or their families should be charged a fee for tertiary education?

Agree	26 - 1
Disagree	- 2

2. The proposed fee could amount to between $900 and $1500 per year for full-time study and a lower fee for part-time study. Do you agree or disagree that students or their families should be charged a fee of between $900 and $1500 per year for full-time tertiary education?

Agree	27 - 1
Disagree	- 2

3. If the Federal Government re-introduced tertiary education fees,

(a) would this have a bearing on the political party for which you vote?

Yes	28 - 1
No	- 2

(b) would this be sufficiently important for you to change the party for which you vote?

Yes	29 - 1
No	- 2

ATF Research Notes

ISSN 0812-0714. Circulated by the Australian Teachers' Federation, GPO Box 1891, Canberra, 2601. Phone (062) 47 9511. Telex 61632 (ATF)

Number 5

29 April 1985

OPINION POLL SHOWS DRAMATIC REJECTION OF TERTIARY TUITION FEES

A national opinion poll conducted by McNair Anderson and commissioned by national teacher organisations shows that any political party that tries to introduce tertiary tuition fees for Australian students will receive a severe electoral backlash.

The poll found that three-quarters of all Australians oppose fees and that 20.7 per cent of all Australians answer YES to the question: "Would the re-introduction of tertiary tuition fees be sufficiently important for you to change the party for which you vote?"

36.9 per cent of 18 to 24 year olds and 26.9 per cent of 14-17 year olds said that they would change their vote over fees.

21.0 per cent of ALP voters and 43.8 per cent of Democrat voters would change their vote over fees. If an ALP Government introduced fees it would not only be deserted by many of its own supporters but would face a drift away of Democrat preferences in both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Marginal Seats

The poll was commissioned by the Australian Teachers' Federation, the Federation of College Academics and Federation of Australian University Staff Associations, at a cost of $5,000.

A national sample of 1279 of respondents in all States were interviewed on the weekend of 30 and 31 March 1985. This was the weekend immediately after the ALP Federal Parliamentary Caucus had rejected Finance Minister Senator Peter Walsh's proposal for the re-introduction of means-tested fees at the annual level of $1,500 per university student and $900 per college of advanced education student.

The results of the poll will 'bury' the fees proposal this year and probably for the life of this Labor Government, which faces its next election at the end of 1987.

A future Liberal-National Government could be expected to support fees in principle but will now think twice before overturning the free public higher education system which we have had in Australia since the Whitlam Government abolished fees in 1974.

69.7 per cent of Liberal-National voters were opposed to fees (ALP 76.4 per cent, Democrats 78.6 per cent). 14.9 per cent of Liberal-National voters said that they would change their votes if fees were re-introduced.

Fees for overseas students have been charged since 1979, a racist and discriminatory measure and one that has always suggested the possibility of extension of Australian students.

But a sample of votes in 10 marginal ALP-held seats, taken within the main poll, confirms the electoral sensitivity of the issue.

As well as the high response from Democrat votes, voters who decide the outcome of elections in marginal seats, 20.1 per cent of all voters in these marginal seats said that they would change their votes if fees were introduced.

Youth Policy Problems

The poll demonstrates to the Commonwealth Government that monetarist and free-market policies may prove to be very unpopular when Australians feel that their basic rights are threatened.

The increased demand for entry to universities and colleges this year shows that many more people now feel that higher education is within their ambit and if restrictions on tertiary places and student financing were lifted, there would be a massive increase in participation.

Only 5.5 per cent of 20 to 24 year old Australians are enrolled in full-time tertiary education, compared to 23.8 per cent in the USA, 23.6 per cent in Italy, 17.0 per cent in Japan and 17.9 per cent in the OECD as a whole.

The poll reveals the close relationship between net student financing and demand for educational participation.

It also shows that ironically, despite its expressed concern about improving its standing amongst youth, the Commonwealth Government has failed to grasp the main issues in youth policy.

By floating proposals this year for cuts to the level of the dole, training allowances in place of youth wages and the introduction of tertiary tuition fees, senior Cabinet Ministers can only have alienated young people.

The Government has also failed to introduce the promised rationalisation of unemployment and education allowances as well as refusing to allow more than a small expansion of educational participation at the post-secondary stage.

It is to be hoped that the Government will overhaul its political and economic strategy towards youth, or it will assist the future election of a Liberal-National Party Government which would have less sympathy for the needs of young people.

Education Unions Effective

The conduct of the poll also indicates the increased political clout exercised by the Australian Teachers' Federation and the other educational unions, despite last year's reversals on school funding policy.

The combined teacher unions played an important second level role in the ALP Caucus rejection of fees, alongside Education Minister Senator Ryan, members of all factions that feared an electoral backlash and a large number of ALP Branches. The four State ALP Premiers (WA's Burke, SA's Bannon, Victoria's Cain and NSW's Wran) eventually came out against fees.

The unions provided the basic data at the root of the arguments against fees. Senator Walsh had claimed that "the socio-economic mix of our tertiary institutions had not changed in the decade since fees were abolished". But a union paper distributed to all members of the Caucus showed that since the abolition of fees in 1974:

* The proportion of university and college students whose fathers work in manual or trade occupations rose from 14 per cent (1974) to 19 per cent (1979) in the universities, and from 18 per cent (1974) to 26 per cent (1974) in the colleges. The representation of students from professional backgrounds declined, especially in the colleges.

* The number of women students rose by a massive 111,509 between 1973 and 1983. The proportion of women rose from 36 per cent (1973) to 44 per cent (1983) in the universities, and 26 per cent (1973) to 48 per cent (1983) in the colleges.

* The extension of fees in TAFE would drive out many students from less advantaged socio-economic locations.

The proposed re-introduction of fees was thus shown to be completely contrary to the ALP Education Policy, with its twin commitments to 'equity' and greater participation.

The 'Trilogy' and Fees

The defeat of the Walsh proposal in Caucus was resented by several senior Ministers who see the 'trilogy' commitment to no increase in Commonwealth spending as more important than all other commitments. It is known that some ALP Ministers favoured the re-introduction of fees - whether to save money or for ideological reasons, as part of a commitment to market-based activity and de-regulation.

However, the ALP Government would be courting disaster if it now introduced fees.

The chief danger to free tertiary education is more likely to come from a future Liberal-National Party Government, which would have a stronger ideological commitment to the free market and to setting up a dual system of higher education.

The fees charged to overseas students must now be removed in order to free tertiary education of all direct financial barriers. The present proposals for private universities in Queensland and WA (Now on the drawing boards) must also be defeated if free public higher education is to be maintained and equality of access to it increased.

The detailed poll results from McNair Anderson are attached.

SIMON MARGINSON
Research Officer
Australian Teachers' Federation

TABLE 1:

SHOULD STUDENTS OR THEIR FAMILIES BE CHARGED A FEE FOR TERTIARY EDUCATION BY AGE/SEX/VOTING INTENTION

AGE GROUP	AGREE	DISAGREE	DON'T KNOW/ NOT STATED
	%	%	
14-17	10.0	80.9	9.1
18-24	11.8	84.0	4.2
25-39	19.6	76.7	3.7
40-54	23.6	73.3	3.1
55+	32.8	62.0	5.2
SEX (all ages)			
Male	26.0	70.1	3.9
Female	17.3	77.6	5.1
All persons	21.6	73.9	4.5
VOTING INTENTION			
ALP	20.4	76.4	3.2
LIB/NP	24.7	69.7	5.6
Democrats	18.0	78.6	3.4
Other	19.5	74.8	5.7

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From an exclusive McNair Anderson Survey.

TABLE 2:

IF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT REINTRODUCED TERTIARY EDUCATION FEES WOULD THIS BE SUFFICIENTLY IMPORTANT FOR YOU TO CHANGE THE PARTY FOR WHICH YOU VOTE - RESPONSES BY AGE/SEX

AGE GROUP	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW/ NOT STATED
	%	%	
14-17	26.9	58.2	14.9
18-24	36.9	57.6	5.6
25-39	21.5	74.8	3.6
40-54	15.6	80.6	3.9
55+	11.6	86.2	2.3
SEX (all ages)			
Male	19.8	75.4	4.8
Female	21.6	73.9	4.5
All Persons	20.7	74.6	4.6

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TABLE 3:

IF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT REINTRODUCED TERTIARY EDUCATION FEES WOULD THIS BE SUFFICIENTLY IMPORTANT FOR YOU TO CHANGE YOUR VOTE - RESPONSES BY VOTING INTENTION/RESPONSE IN MARGINAL ALP SEATS

VOTING INTENTION	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
	%	%	%
ALP	21.0	74.5	4.5
LIB/CP	14.9	83.6	1.5
Democrats	43.8	52.2	4.0
Other	23.6	65.0	11.5
MARGINAL ALP SEATS*	20.1	75.9	4.0
ALL PERSONS	20.7	74.6	4.6

* Based on a sample taken from the electorates of Leichhardt, Dunkley, Hawker, Hunter, Bowman, Stirling, Eden-Monaro, Phillip, Bendigo and Chisholm.

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From an exclusive McNair Anderson Survey.

TABLE 4:

OCCUPATIONAL BACKGROUND OF THE FATHERS OF HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS - 1974 COMPARED TO 1979

OCCUPATIONAL BACKGROUND OF STUDENTS' FATHERS	PERCENTAGE OF ALL STUDENTS IN: 1974	1979
	%	%
PROFESSIONAL		
Universities	33	32
Colleges	26	18
TRADES AND MANUAL		
Universities	14	19
Colleges	18	26

(SOURCE: Anderson and Vervoorn, Access to Privilege, Page 146 and Commonwealth Department of Education, 1979 Survey of Full-Time Tertiary Student Finances, Page 19).